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## The Queasy Side of Theodore Roosevelt's Diplomatic Voyage

James Bradley's incendiary new book about Theodore Roosevelt is not really packed with secrets.

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BOOKS OF THE TIMES

But Roosevelt biographers often subscribe to certain orthodoxies, and one of them is this: When Roosevelt made noisily racist and ethnocentric remarks about

Anglo-Saxon greatness, so what? He was just voicing the tenets of his time.

"Nationalistic boasting was in fashion," shrugs Douglas Brinkley's nearly 1,000-page "Wilderness Warrior," published this year.

Mr. Bradley, the author of "Flags of Our Fathers," does not simply cite Roosevelt's egregious talk. He presents this much-ignored aspect of Roosevelt's thinking with sharp speci-



### The Imperial Cruise

A Secret History of Empire and War

By James Bradley  
Illustrated. 387 pages.  
Little, Brown & Company. \$29.99.

ficity ("I am so angry with that infernal little Cuban republic that I would like to wipe its people off the face of the earth,"

Roosevelt wrote in 1906) and then goes on to make a much more damaging point, angrily and persuasively connecting Roosevelt's race-based foreign policy miscalculations in Asia. His thesis in "The Imperial Cruise" is startling enough to reshape conventional wisdom about Roosevelt's presidency.

"Here was the match that lit the fuse, and yet for decades we paid attention only to the dynamite," Mr. Bradley writes. The

flame to which he refers is Roosevelt's secret diplomacy with Japan and his encouragement of Japanese imperialism. ("I should like to see Japan have Korea," he once declared.) In a far-reaching book that also addresses Roosevelt's misconceptions about Korea, Hawaii, China and the Philippines, Mr. Bradley places critical emphasis on the dangerous American-Japanese

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relationship that, he says, Roosevelt helped create.

"Knowing a lot about race theory but less about international diplomacy and almost nothing about Asia," he writes, "Roosevelt in 1905 careened U.S.-Japanese relations on the dark side road leading to 1941."

This assertion is certainly debatable. And neither "The Imperial Cruise" nor Mr. Bradley, whose earlier "Flyboys" offered a gruesome account of the deaths of American World War II pilots on the Japanese-held island of Chichi Jima, is beyond reproach. Mr. Bradley favors broad strokes and may at times be overly eager to connect historical dots, but he also produces graphic, shocking evidence of the attitudes that his book describes.

If racism is nothing new, Mr. Bradley's readers may still be surprised at the xenophobic ugliness of the photos, letters, cartoons, lyrics and political speeches cited here. And if, for instance, American use of waterboarding against turn-of-the-century Filipino prisoners is not unknown (it was the subject of a New Yorker article last year), neither is it common knowledge. Nor, perhaps, are the lyrics to "The Water Cure," a vintage United States Army marching song: "Shove in the nozzle deep and let him taste of liberty/Shouting the battle cry of freedom." The toughest parts of this book re-reveal things we should already know.

Mr. Bradley builds "The Impe-

rial Cruise" around the public relations event that its title describes: a 1905 voyage of the liner Manchuria during which the first daughter, Alice Roosevelt, and the future President William Howard Taft, then Roosevelt's secretary of war, docked in the countries that this book describes.

Mixing very familiar elements (i.e., any of Alice Roosevelt's antics) with other, more startling material, Mr. Bradley first cites some of the academic and philosophical influences on the Harvard-educated Roosevelt's early thinking. His were common ideas for his time.

"One after another, White Christian males in America's finest universities 'discovered' that the Aryan was God's highest creation, that the Negro was designed for servitude and that the Indian was doomed to extinction," Mr. Bradley writes.

Mr. Bradley describes with particular venom the misinformation given to the American public about the cost, duration and intensity of the Philippine struggle, which began when the Filipino revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo allowed American soldiers ashore to fight the Spanish-American War and made the terrible mistake of presuming that the United States Constitution made no provision for taking colonies.

Quoting Gen. Arthur MacArthur, he pointedly describes a too familiar situation. "General MacArthur described a depressing quagmire where the U.S. Army controlled only 117 miles out of a



KELLY CAMPBELL

### James Bradley

total of 116,000 square miles, a hostile country where Americans could not venture out alone and a shell-shocked populace whose hatred for their oppressors grew each day," he writes. "The Imperial Cruise" is all too persuasive in its visions of history repeating itself.

Another chapter describes the means by which the idea of exporting suffrage and democracy to primitive societies needed to be adjusted for Hawaii, with its existing native monarch and vastly outnumbered white population. Here and in its discussion of China, the book particularly emphasizes the way American assumptions of white superiority made the patriotism of other populations hard to understand. Roosevelt's "inability to recognize third-world nationalism" is

cited again and again, not simply as a prejudice but as an obstacle to effective policy.

Even worse, according to Mr. Bradley, was Roosevelt's frequent presumption that he did understand other cultures. This book argues that Roosevelt's designation of the Japanese as born leaders and veritable Americans, worthy of imposing their own Monroe Doctrine on weaker nations like Korea, was a cataclysmic mistake.

In 1905 his miscalculations had expanded to include Russia too. Even while brokering the Portsmouth Treaty that ended the Russo-Japanese War and won him the Nobel Peace Prize, "Roosevelt imagined the Japanese as eternal opponents of the Slav, not entertaining the possibility that Russia and Japan would kiss and make up after the war," Mr. Bradley writes crudely. "And since Roosevelt kept his analysis secret from everyone except his Japanese allies and yes-men like Taft, there was no one to grab the reins before Roosevelt drove America's future in Asia into a ditch."

At times like this, Mr. Bradley risks sounding dangerously hot-headed. But if he brings a reckless passion to "The Imperial Cruise," there is at least one extenuating fact behind his thinking. In "Flags of Our Fathers" he wrote about how his father helped plant the American flag on the island of Iwo Jima during World War II. In "The Imperial Cruise" he asks why American servicemen like his father had to be fighting in the Pacific at all.